

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed December 31, 2003, has been carefully studied. The claims in the application are now only allowed claims 7 and 11, whereby the present application should now be in condition for formal allowance. Such is respectfully requested.

Acknowledgement by the PTO of the receipt of applicants' papers filed under Section 119 is noted.

As regards the restriction requirement, applicants indicated in the last Reply that they accepted the previous restriction requirement. They also accept the present restriction requirement, i.e. they accept that the different Groups define patentably distinct inventions, whereby claims 13-30 have now been deleted without prejudice to the present invention and without prejudice to applicants' rights, including those provided by §§121, 120 and 119, to proceed with a divisional application on the subject matter of the restricted out claims without any penalty whatsoever. Thus, applicants affirm the election of claims 1-12.

Claims 7 and 11 have been allowed, whereby applicants understand that these claims are deemed by the PTO

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Reply to Office Action of December 31, 2003


to define novel and unobvious subject matter under §§102 and 103.

Claims 1-6, 8-10 and 12 have been rejected on the basis of prior art. Applicants need not address these rejections at the present time as the rejected claims have now been canceled from the present application without prejudice to the allowed claims and without prejudice to applicants' rights to pursue the rejected claims (or similar claims) in a continuing application, if applicants choose to do so, without any penalty whatsoever, applicants relying on their rights including those provided by §§120 and 119.

Applicants believe that all issues have been addressed and resolved above, whereby only allowed claims 7 and 11 remain in the present application. Accordingly, applicants request prompt favorable consideration and early formal allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

BROWDY AND NEIMARK, P.L.L.C.
Attorneys for Applicants

By 
Sheridan Neimark
Registration No. 20,520

SN:jaa
Telephone No.: (202) 628-5197
Facsimile No.: (202) 737-3528
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